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**„man bedauert es, daß die stimmen nur selten, nur in ganz besonders hellen und klaren nächten zu hören sind.“<sup>1</sup> Haunted Landscapes and Holocaust Memory in Romanian-German Literature**

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**Abstract**

Confronting the local history of the Holocaust, ethnic German writers such as Franz Hodjak, Werner Söllner and Herta Müller focus on the rural landscape and the proximity of killing to daily life in Romania, rendering innocuous agricultural activities and the beauty of the countryside – so often idealised in the German culture of *Heimat* – uncanny and threatening. The presence of human remains in the soil and the function of rural tranquillity in facilitating amnesia surrounding the fascist past mean that landscapes become a veneer concealing historical realities. In thematising the tension between local memory and international remembrance these authors pre-empt recent efforts by historians and cultural theorists to diversify and complicate Holocaust memory.

**Introduction**

As subjects with access to both Eastern and Western European understandings of history, writers from German-speaking communities in Banat and Transylvania in the 1970s and 1980s were uniquely positioned to reflect on competing tendencies in collective memory. Although they adopt elements of international German-language *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in their work, they also provide a perspective that complicates the most prevalent discourses on the Nazi past in Western Europe. Originating from spaces close to the killing zones of Hungarian-occupied Northern Transylvania, German-occupied Yugoslavia, Bucovina, Bessarabia and Transnistria, to them the crimes of the Nazis and allied fascist forces belong not to some unclaimed ‘elsewhere’ but to local and national history and, in some cases, living memory. Conversely, their embrace of ideas of collective guilt and exploration of personal culpability among their neighbours and relatives is unusual for Eastern Europe, where communist triumphalism and the identification of Germans as sole perpetrators of genocide have tended to exculpate local collaborators and overshadow the murderous actions of indigenous instigators of violence. The transnational nature of the Romanian-German ethnic allegiance and the dual perspective at work in their geographical self-understanding produces a vision of the past which is complex and multivalent, satisfied by neither Eastern nor Western discourse.

Recent scholarship emphasises the dominance of Western memory when it comes to the Holocaust and argues that viewing the experiences of assimilated, middle-class Jews from Western countries in concentration camps as paradigmatic for victim and survivor trajectories has led to the marginalisation of experiences of Jews from East Central and Eastern Europe in historiography and public remembrance.<sup>2</sup> Since the 1980s, the reception and translation of survivor testimonies from the communist bloc has increased and Western historical researchers have sought to supplement research using Soviet archives, yet such efforts have had an uneven impact on public awareness. Syntheses of existing research, such as Timothy Snyder’s *Bloodlands* (2009) are able to present basic statistics, such as the fact that nearly ninety percent of the victims of the Holocaust were from Eastern Europe, as revelatory to the average Western reader.<sup>3</sup> Father Patrick Desbois’s work on the Einsatzgruppen, *Holocaust by Bullets* (2008) has had a similar pronounced effect in challenging the centrality of killing by gas in the Western historical imagination, even though scandals around the Wehrmacht had raised the issue of mass murder on and behind the Eastern Front only a decade

previously.<sup>4</sup> In East Central and Eastern European states, meanwhile, communist suppression of the Holocaust after the immediate post-war period meant that remembrance has been belated, incomplete and fraught with tensions. Resentment surrounding the perceived imposition of Western norms of Holocaust remembrance through EU legislation and public discourse has been a cause celebre mobilised by nationalist revisionist movements and is a factor in growing antisemitism across the region. Historical research published in local languages is insufficiently received in the highly developed field of Holocaust Studies in the West, which largely relies on translated sources and German historiography. Cultural representations and commemorative projects from Eastern Europe broadly exhibit what Alison Landsberg has referred to as the emerging iconography of the Holocaust popularised by accounts of concentration camp survivors and, latterly, Hollywood.<sup>5</sup> Despite increasing numbers of works that assert additional perspectives (see the success of films such as Paweł Pawlikowski's *Ida* (2013) and writers such as Svetlana Alexievich)<sup>6</sup>, the Holocaust in the East paradoxically remains an often Westernised event. The 'dark mirage' of the concentration camp as the nadir of Nazi activities continues to obscure the 'unknown desert' beneath.<sup>7</sup>

This paper will focus on depictions of Holocaust killing sites by members of the Banat-Swabian and Transylvanian Saxon communities of Romania and explore the revolutionary approaches to remembering the Holocaust taken by a small group of young authors in the 1970s-1980s. Franz Hodjak (b. Sibiu, 1944), Herta Müller (b. Nițchidorf, 1953), Werner Söllner (b. Horia, 1951) and Claus Stephani (b. Brașov, 1938) were part of a wider movement of second generation Romanian-German writers, who aimed to bring to light the role played by their communities, and in some cases even their families, in the crimes of National Socialism. Although this confrontation drew inspiration from international, and particularly West German and Austrian, approaches to the Nazi past, texts produced by these authors complicated contemporary Western visions of the Holocaust by focusing on local events and the history of the Holocaust outside the well-recorded spaces of exception. Their work represents both an important stage in Romanian national memory and a challenge to the distorted view of Nazi activities that dominated – and some argue continues to dominate – in the West. The texts explored here both anticipate later engagements with the divided memory of the Holocaust and offer potential approaches to reconciling and combining those cultural memory traditions.

## Silence and Self-Exoneration in Post-1944 Romania

Although Romania was heavily implicated in anti-Semitic and anti-Roma violence during the Holocaust and responsible for the murder of 280,000-380,000 Jews for the most part without significant prompting from their Nazi allies, this stark reality has had little place in post-war public discourse until recently.<sup>8</sup> As in the rest of the Eastern Bloc, the Romanian communist government propagated a legend of anti-fascist resistance that effaced the identity of Jewish victims and more recently small but vocal groups within Romanian society have labelled the Holocaust anti-Romanian propaganda in the context of their efforts to rehabilitate wartime leaders as anti-communist heroes.<sup>9</sup> Within the German minority too, the history of the Second World War has been subject to the demands of post-war conditions. Although 55,000- 65,000 Romanian Germans served in the Waffen-SS (Paul Milata sets the figure at 63,560), and as *Volksdeutsche* these men were more likely to serve in concentration and extermination camps than *Reichsdeutsche*, their part in the war came to be remembered as heroic and soldierly.<sup>10</sup> The minority's post-war victimisation by the Soviets and the ethnic Romanian-dominated communist government, including deportations to labour camps, forced relocation to unfertile lands and other imposed hardships related to the war overshadowed issues of collective guilt and the years 1938-44 were remembered variously as a halcyon era of German ethnic ascendancy or as the background to present-day injustice. Romanian-German SS-men who survived the war and were able to return home resumed their lives untroubled by the threat of prosecution or disapproval from their communities.<sup>11</sup> As in much of the rest of Europe, veterans propagated a myth of a "clean war", in which war crimes were painted as the preserve of a

minority of rotten apples (usually *Reichsdeutsche*). The anti-German rhetoric of the Romanian Communist regime in the 1940s only served to entrench feelings of victimisation and self-righteousness among the Germans, who saw these criticisms as pure hypocrisy on the part of the Romanian majority.<sup>12</sup> However, by the 1960s a shift towards policies of national unity had allowed a rehabilitation of Germans and the crimes of National Socialism were positioned as something even more external to the Romanian nation.

## International Discourse on the Holocaust and Its Reception in German-Speaking Romania

With the exception of early testimonies by Romanian Jewish survivors, the emergence of the Holocaust as a topic in German-language literature in Romania began after the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961. As was the case in the West, the trial was a watershed in the development of public awareness of the Holocaust because of its scale, its exposure of the role of low-level functionaries and its establishment of the Holocaust as a Jewish event in the cultural mainstream.<sup>13</sup> For the Romanian regime, the proceedings, and others like it throughout the 1960s, offered proof that the West was still harbouring Nazi war criminals and the opportunity the trials created to denigrate capitalism outweighed the impulse to foreground exclusively communist victims. Trials of camp guards, fugitive or undercover war criminals and the exploits of 'Nazi-hunters' like Simon Wiesenthal appeared frequently in the national press, including German-language publications such as *Neue Weg* and *Neue Banater Zeitung*.<sup>14</sup>

The reception of Western literature and Hollywood films behind the Iron Curtain was limited but the emergence of a specifically Jewish narrative of the Holocaust in international popular culture in the 1960s contributed to a marked shift in discourse observable in German-language publications in Romania around 1970. The regime prided itself on its purported openness when it came to the availability of foreign works and, more saliently, struggled to maintain a censorship apparatus for minority languages; the high number of German-speaking Romanians with relatives in the West also increased the accessibility of cultural knowledge and products. The discussion of fascism remained sensitive but there was an increase in the reception of survivor memoirs and other documents of Jewish experience, especially towards the end of the 1960s. *Judgement at Nuremberg* (Stanley Kramer, 1961) received coverage (belatedly) in the literary journal *Neue Literatur* in 1967, as did other significant works of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* such as Jean-Francois Steiner's *Treblinka* (1966) and Arthur Miller's *After the Fall* (1964).<sup>15</sup> The journal's publication of Yevgeny Yevtushenko's poem 'Babi Jar' in 1961, celebration of the double award of the Nobel Prize in Literature to Nelly Sachs and Schmucl Agnon in 1966 and discussion of the international outcry following the suicide of Paul Celan in 1970 meant that Jewish suffering became a small but recurrent theme. The journal also published works translated from Yiddish by poets including Rachel Korn's 'Bei Toren der Gaskammern' and Abraham Sutzkever's 'Inscription auf einem Waggonbrett' in an issue commemorating Alfred Margul-Sperber.<sup>16</sup> Around the same time, popular Timișoara newspaper *Neue Banater Zeitung* gradually began to report Nazi trials differently, mentioning civilian victims of Nazi violence (as opposed to only resistance fighters and communist agitators) more often and eventually naming Jews as targets of genocide.<sup>17</sup>

## Memory Work and Generational Conflict in the Romanian-German Literary Establishment

Although literary works that touched on the role of the German minorities in National Socialism had emerged in German-speaking Romania prior to 1970, the nature of the debate and the tone of the

works produced shifted after that date. In part, this was a result of a generational change, which saw established writers who focused on the war era, such as Heinrich Zillich (b. 1898), Hans Kehrer (Stefan Heinz, b. 1913), Irene Mokka (b. 1915) and Franz Keller, competing with new voices of the post-war generations. Where the older writers had lived through the war as adults (and in the case of Zillich, Kehrer and Mokka, made a living from writing nationalist texts during the fascist regime), younger authors felt increasingly driven to find out about the past and confront the silence surrounding the crimes of National Socialism that pervaded their communities and families.<sup>18</sup> The interest of the very young writers – among them members of the *Aktionsgruppe Banat* and the still school-aged authors who would follow their anti-establishment trajectory, such as Herta Müller – was actively developed by members of the progressive Romanian-German literary establishment, including Nikolaus Berwanger (b. 1935) and Anemone Latzina (b. 1942). In 1970 the editors of *Neue Literatur*, led by Paul Schuster (b. 1930), organised a ‘literary agitation tour’ (‘literarische Agitationsreise’) around German grammar schools in Banat in which the ‘involvement of the father in the war’ (‘Kriegsbeteiligung des Vaters’) was one of the named topics for discussion.<sup>19</sup>

The texts these young writers produced about the war often presented critical perspectives on the ethnic German minority and the stilted, self-exonerating style of the older generation of its writers. Hans Kehrer’s play *Narrenbrot* (Fools’ Bread, 1974), which describes the effort to evacuate ethnic Germans from Banat ahead of the Russian advance in 1944, is typical of these apologist texts. His protagonist, SS officer Eberwein, functions as the heroic face of the average German soldier as he struggles to save civilians despite the incompetence and cruelty of the upper echelons of the army and the interference of profiteers.<sup>20</sup> His defence of innocents, including the inhabitants of a psychiatric hospital, serves to distance the reader and the Banat-Swabian community from the taint of Nazism and exculpates Eberwein from any responsibility for the actions of an army in which he is not only a soldier but an officer. The Holocaust is entirely absent from *Narrenbrot* and in works where the topic is addressed, the revisionist impulse displayed by Kehrer is often reproduced. Franz Keller’s novel *Proletenmichel*, published in excerpts in *Neue Literatur* in 1965, follows the experiences of a wide-eyed, Hitler-devoted private as he and his Wehrmacht unit become unwilling participants in a deportation of Hungarian Jews.<sup>21</sup> When an SS officer reprimands him for offering a female prisoner and her child a drink of water, the protagonist’s non-comprehension of the situation means that his commanding officer must explain to him what is happening: “‘Keinem Kinde, einem Judenbengel, wenn Sie es wirklich nicht wissen sollten, Sie Kamel.’ [...] Also das war es. Die junge Frau war eine Jüdin, die mit anderen Hunderten den Weg in irgendein KZ ging’.”<sup>22</sup> This highly implausible innocence regarding the identity of the prisoners and his similarly implausible response: “‘Das tut ein Wehrmachtsangehöriger nicht, verstehen Sie?’” reinforce his moral righteousness.<sup>23</sup> Even where the crimes of fascists are alluded to or represented, as in the graphically violent front stories of Ludwig Schwarz, which have been compared to the writing of Wolfgang Borchert, sympathetic characters (and thereby the audience) are spared the burden of collective guilt.<sup>24</sup> Instead, ethnic Germans are portrayed as the dupes of external forces, whether SS men, propagandists or *Reichsdeutsche* and probing the experience of victims or the nature of individual and collective guilt is not a priority.

The opposite is true of the work of a number of authors born during and after the Second World War, who combined a Brechtian interest in the structural dimensions of fascism with a pronounced concern for the psychological legacy of war and membership in the perpetrator collective. Experimental in their use of form, these poets and authors, including members of the *Aktionsgruppe Banat*<sup>25</sup>, Werner Söllner (b. Horia, 1951), Horst Samson (b. Salcâmi, 1954), Herta Müller (b. Nițchidorf, 1957) and Helmuth Frauendorfer (b. Voiteg, 1959), as well as slightly older colleagues Claus Stephani (b. Brașov, 1938), Christian Maurer (b. Sibiu, 1939), and Franz Hodjak (b. Sibiu, 1944) began in the late 1960s and 1970s to examine such sensitive topics as intergenerational conflict, PTSD among veterans, collective guilt and historical denial in the context of their respective communities. Their work displays the influence of international trends, including the West German leftist writing of the 1960s, such as Rolf Hochhuth’s *Der Stellvertreter* (1965), Peter Weiss’s *Die*

*Ermittlung* (1965) and Siegfried Lenz's *Deutschstunde* (1968), all reviewed in *Neue Literatur*, Austrian anti-Heimat literature, and the poetry of the East German *Lyrik-Welle*. Their engagement with the past largely mirrored Volker Braun's concept of historical consciousness as self-consciousness, combining the sparse, visual style of Brechtian 'vergesellschaftete[en] Landschaft[en]' with a close interest in the self as a historical subject.<sup>26</sup>

Although their access to texts and films was limited, young ethnic German authors in communist Romania were part of a transnational discourse. They read the same history books, observed the same judicial proceedings and responded to the same key literary works as their German-speaking contemporaries abroad, albeit it through a different lens. The topic of National Socialism functioned as a focal point for generational conflict and anti-establishment thinking even as it dovetailed with the interests of the state in criticising fascism and establishing the moral superiority of socialism, a tendency for which these writers were often attacked.<sup>27</sup> Members of the Aktionsgruppe Banat and their contemporaries in Timișoara embarked on a collaborative fact-finding mission, helping each other to access historical and literary texts on National Socialism by authors such as Bertolt Brecht, Paul Celan, Theodor Kramer, Thomas Bernhard, Peter Handke, Victor Klemperer, Eugen Kogon and Elias Canetti, often accessed via the Goethe Institut in Bucharest.<sup>28</sup> The first piece of Romanian-German Samizdat, *AMG-Info*, published in 1981, focused on the generational conflict emerging within the Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn literary circle as younger authors' efforts to challenge their older colleagues, not least on the subject of the war, led to confrontations.<sup>29</sup>

Particularly noticeable in the writing of these authors is the personal approach they take to the history of fascism. Often discussed as students of the West German and Austrian *Neue Subjektivität*, the writers named above tended to focus on the emotional repercussions of fascism, particularly on the damage wrought upon families by authoritarian and often traumatised parents and on the alienation felt among young people in communities whose values or concerns they did not share.<sup>30</sup> As Richard Wagner declared at a meeting of the Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn circle in 1981:

Die Deutschen, unter denen wir aufwuchsen, hießen Vater und Mutter und Tante und Onkel. Unter ihnen waren auch die ersten Nazis unseres Lebens. Sie saßen abends bei der Kartenpartie, knallten die Trümpfe hin und sprachen von Verrat und verlorenen Schlachten, und der Konjunktiv half ihnen über das Nachdenken hinweg.<sup>31</sup>

Wagner and Müller are perhaps best known for their excoriating criticisms of the values and behaviour of the Banat Swabians, drawing comparisons between their traditionalism and the 'Blut und Boden' values of the Third Reich but fathers, and especially fathers who are veterans, are a recurring feature of texts from the period. Some take up the theme of fatherly culpability without direct reference to the Nazi past, such as Johann Lippert's 'biographie. ein muster' (biography. a pattern, 1978), Balthasar Waitz's 'Unser Brunnen' (Our Well, 1980) and Willy Ehrmann's 'Krista' (1980), which focus on traditional gender roles and the fear engendered by the father within the traditional Swabian family, as well as violence within the home.<sup>32</sup> The critique of village life found in texts of the younger generation from the late 1960s onwards responds in part to the Austrian tradition of anti-Heimat literature represented by writers such as Thomas Bernhard as well as to Eastern European German-language writers like Johannes Bobrowski, who several of these authors named as an influence.<sup>33</sup> More directly confrontational approaches also appeared, such as the poem 'Vision 1' by Klaus Konjatzky (1980), a dreamlike poem in which the narrator imagines himself on a theatre stage against a backdrop of the rural landscape: 'Sie schauen mich an, wie wir / damals die schuldigen Väter, / die wir fragten: "Und ihr? / Habt ihr die Zäune nicht gesehn? / Und nicht die Schüsse gehört? / Habt euch da rausgehalten, wie?"'<sup>34</sup>

The abstract nature of Konjatzky's work and its reliance on the familiar images of the concentration camp setting represents a wider tendency towards naivety in Romanian-German writing on the Second World War. While the result of the greater engagement of the younger

generation with the legacy of fascism was a marked increase in writing on the Nazi, this was often restricted to the introduction of a limited number of visual and geographical references and a decidedly vague conceptualisation of what the Nazis' crimes had been. References to battles such as Stalingrad and Narwa are the most common method of signalling the Second World War. Words such as 'erschossen' (shot dead) and 'Massengrab' (mass grave) are used to signal mass death and the pointless suffering of soldiers and civilian victims alike. Abstract allusions to concentration camps (such as that made by Konjetsky) 'stand in' for historical knowledge of the Holocaust and for specificity. These allusions are also generally marked by a strong sense of having taken place elsewhere, 'im Osten' (in the East) or 'im Krieg' (in the war), rather than containing any implication of the Holocaust having also been a local (or at least national) event. The texts that deviate from this pattern are important because they reveal a specifically German-Romanian mode of remembering.

When it comes to their perspective on the Holocaust most of the texts by ethnic German authors differ little from their Western counterparts. Typically 'Eastern' aspects of the genocide that are identified as marginalised by scholars like Snyder, such as the mass shootings of Jews by the Einsatzgruppen or the Aktion Reinhard camps, are seldom alluded to and the conceptualisation of the Holocaust as located in concentration camps is broadly reinforced. This tendency mirrors West German and Austrian portrayals, in which 'extra-concentratory' mass killing was also seldom thematised. Exceptional soldier novels such as Curt Hohoff's *Woina – Woina* (1951) and Peter Bamm's *Die unsichtbare Flagge* (1952) that did describe the murder of Jews by fighting units (including Wehrmacht soldiers) on the Eastern Front tended to depict these as incidental, isolated events, as Kehrler does the sentencing to death of psychiatric patients in the final weeks of the war in *Narrenbrot*.<sup>35</sup> Those that address the persecution of Jews in a more sustained way tend to focus on the pre-war German context or, as in the case of Heinrich Böll's *Wo warst du, Adam?* (1951), centre the experience of soldiers as bystanders to deportations, like Keller's Michel. Testimonies concerning the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, such as Jakob Littner's *Aufzeichnungen aus einem Erdloch* about his life in hiding in Galicia during the war (rewritten and published by Wolfgang Koeppen, 1948), and Edgar Hilsenrath's *Nacht* (1964), about his experiences in ghettos in Transnistria, were not widely or positively received in West Germany or Austria.<sup>36</sup> The literary work of H.G. Adler, a survivor of Theresienstadt and Auschwitz, was similarly overlooked, even though his historical research on the ghetto in the 1950s was seen as definitive.<sup>37</sup> Mass shootings, such as the massacre at Babi Jar have only emerged as a focus of literary depictions in the last two decades, although the American TV-series *Holocaust* made the massacre a household name in 1979. Recent works focused on Babi Jar, such as Katja Petrowskaja's *Vielleicht Esther* (2014) and Bernd Ohm's *Wolfstadt* (2015), display the influence of family history and international historiography and literature. The latter author explicitly acknowledges his debt to the work of Father Patrick Desbois and Yahad in Unum on his blog and his use of a perpetrator as the first-person narrator is reminiscent of Jonathan Littell's *The Kindly Ones* (2006), which had an enormous impact in Germany.<sup>38</sup> Memories of local collaboration in anti-Jewish violence in Germany and Austria themselves have likewise been limited, although the topic was addressed as early as 1949 in East German author Willi Bredel's 'Das schweigende Dorf'.<sup>39</sup> A prominent exception to this was Elisabeth Reichart's *Februarschatten* (1984) about the so-called 'Mühlviertler Hasenjagd' of February 1945 in which civilians from villages near Linz participated in a three-week hunt of escaped Soviet prisoners of war from a satellite camp of Mauthausen. The massacre at Rechnitz of 200 sick and injured Jewish concentration camp inmates in 1945 during the forced marches of prisoners away from the advancing front became the subject of the Elfriede Jelinek's 2008 play *Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)*. Depictions of extra-concentratory mass killing by Romanian-German authors in the 1970s and 1980s represent a distinct approach to the history of the Holocaust and collective guilt, and both this and the authors' shared focus on space as a container of memory anticipate later literary developments in Germany and Austria.

## Breaking the Silence: Investigating the Romanian Holocaust in German-Language Prose

An important figure in uncovering the history of the Holocaust in German-speaking Romania is Transylvanian Saxon author, dialectologist and local historian Claus Stephani. He began collecting oral histories of Germans and Jews from across Transylvania, Maramureş, Satu Mare and Bukovina in the 1960s and published three volumes of these accounts between 1970 and 1985. Some appeared in the journal *Neue Literatur*, of which he was an editor from 1967 onwards, including the testimony of Baila Rosenberg-Friedmann, which was collected in May 1984 and appeared in the journal later that year. In the excerpt, entitled 'Schmerz bis in den Tod' ('Pain until my Dying Day'), she recounts the deportation of Jews from Vişeu de Sus (Oberwischau) in Maramureş County:

Es war gwesn im Jahr zweiundvierzig, genau vor unsre Ostern, da hat man vun überall uns zusammengenommen und wegfiert: die, wo habn gwohnt in der Judngass, im Ghetto, hat man gnommen zaersch. Jo, in Wischau was gwesn a Ghetto, erscht nur mit eine Gassn, zuletscht met mehrere. Sie habn unsre Leit zusammdriebl – die Soldatn, wos sein kommen von Sigeth. Dann warn gwesn Transportn: erschr, zweitr, drittr, vārtr; Ostern war der erschr.<sup>40</sup>

The deportations Rosenberg-Friedmann recalls took place between March and August 1944 as part of the German-orchestrated deportation of Hungarian Jews (Hungary had been occupying Northern Transylvania and other former territories since 1940 but did not accede to German demands to deport Jews to German camps until 1944). Although the testimony records crimes against Jews carried out by the Nazi armed forces and assisted by Hungarians, the speaker's reflections on race relations seem to apply to local ethnic Germans: "Sehens, die Deitsche warn gute Leit, bevor is kommen der Hitler. (...) Als is kommen der Hitler, alles is wordn anderscht: pletzlich war aso a großer Haß da".<sup>41</sup> Significantly, Rosenberg-Friedmann also recalls the indifference of her neighbours – ethnic Germans, Romanians and Hungarians – to her suffering *after* the war and to the fate of her children, who were murdered following the deportations.<sup>42</sup> This criticism of pre- and post-war society and its treatment of Jews undermines the long-standing myth of pre-war unity, challenging the narratives of Romanian and ethnic German innocence as well as the moral superiority of the communist era.<sup>43</sup> The piece identifies the events of the Second World War as local and ongoing issues, with the hostility of the local non-Jewish community in Maramureş linked closely to crimes of the National Socialists. The publication of this testimony in the primary literary forum of German-speaking Romania signals the growing appetite for information about the fascist era and ethical engagement with the Holocaust in Romania among authors and readers in the 1980s.

The theme of personal responsibility and collective guilt among civilians had previously been addressed in works focussing on daily life in wartime. In 'Hübscher deutscher Bub', Ernst Kulcsar's titular protagonist witnesses Jews in Sibiu being forced to clean the streets and his Jewish neighbours becoming pariahs within the local community. When he joins the Pimpfen and the Deutsche Jugend he is encouraged to join in harassing them, and later attacks his neighbour's son. However, his strict, moral grandmother criticises the mistreatment of their fellow citizens, and the boy himself sees the error of his ways and is forgiven by his victim (Kulcsar, 1980, 12, 16, 24). The text, like other 'gesellschaftliche Panoramabilder der Kriegsjahre' in the towns and villages of Transylvania and the Banat, offers a resolution to historical guilt through the presentation of exception characters, in this case the grandmother, and the reduction of discriminatory laws and accompanying violence to interpersonal issues.<sup>44</sup> Of more interest in the text is the detailed description of the city of Sibiu and the firm location of historical crimes in spaces recognisable both to its present-day inhabitants and to the wider Transylvanian Saxon and German-speaking communities as a cultural hub.



An earlier text that addresses the Romanian Holocaust through reference to city space is Horst Fassel's 'jassy – der vorstoss der rückschau' (Iași – the advance of retrospection 1977), which places the infamous pogrom in Iași in late June 1941 in wider historical-geographical survey of the city: 'die synagoge am tîrgul cucului und der zeigefinger des mager gereckten obeliskens: pogrom, 1941. jüdenfriedhof auf dem berg'.<sup>45</sup> Mentioning the Iași Pogrom, which saw the murder of over 8,000 Jews by soldiers, police, gendarmes and civilians, even in such a brief sentence, was a bold choice as it concerns war crimes committed predominantly by ethnic Romanians, and under Romanian command.<sup>46</sup> The SS were involved in the pogrom, which was the most significant act of violence perpetrated against Jews in Romania at this point, and collaborated with Romanian forces in arresting and attacking Jews but the planning and implementation of the operation in Iași that led to the pogrom was the responsibility of Romanian army and Special Information Service (SSI) officials.<sup>47</sup> Evidence used in the 1946 trials of Antonescu and some of the perpetrators of Iași was suppressed under communism, with the black book summarising the incident removed from libraries during the 1950s.<sup>48</sup> These documents were not reprinted until the 1990s and Romania's active persecution of Jews during fascism remained a largely silent history.<sup>49</sup> Fassel's allusion to the pogrom is suggestive of its place in collective memory outside institutions two decades earlier.

The history of mass killing on Romanian territory is also addressed in Franz Hodjak's short prose piece 'reiseintermezzo' (journey interlude) from 1977, in which the narrator describes an unscheduled tour stop and confrontation with the memorial to the 1944 massacre of 126 Jews in Sărmășu by Hungarian gendarmes, the Hungarian National Guard and local ethnic Hungarians.<sup>50</sup> The account of the night of the massacre given by an old villager in the text corresponds closely to real testimony concerning the Sărmășu massacre, most notably the details of victims having to dig their own graves and the continual screams heard during the night: 'und jetzt noch, behauptet der batsch, sollen diese schreie in ganz besonders hellen und klaren nächten zu hören sein.'<sup>51</sup> Although the text mentions the victims without specifying their ethnicity, Hodjak signals their Jewishness through his use of imagery associated with the extermination camp:

kleine umfriedung, betonzäun, ganz gewöhnliche platen. dahinter gräber, in der mitte der hinteren front ein denkmal, konisch, nicht zu hoch, schlicht. es gibt also nicht viel zu sehn. keine daumenschrauben, keine feuerzange, keine gaskammern, keine verbrennungsöfen. hier hatte der menschliche geist notgedrungen unter verzicht auf alle mittel der technik seine genialität mittels einmaliger improvisation unter beweis gestellt.<sup>52</sup>

Notable in this passage is the way the narrator contrasts the methods of killing used in Sărmășu with the knowledge he has of the Holocaust from elsewhere. The tension between the shared antisemitic impulse behind the murders and the vast difference in how they are carried out hints at the insufficiency of narratives surrounding the Holocaust to reflect local, improvised acts of brutality. The predominant cultural imaginary of Nazi killing, focused on deportation, forced labour and mechanised death in specially built facilities, does not provide useful frames of reference for this kind of face-to-face murder with fists, makeshift weapons and bullets, witnessed by neighbours.

As well as contrasting top-down and local memory against each other, Hodjak's text expresses a dissatisfaction with collective remembrance and the efficacy of memorials in communicating past realities. Much as the juxtaposition of the pogrom and the Jewish cemetery in Fassel's poem opens up a gulf between the terrible violence of June 1941 and the Jewish community's regular cycle of life, the description of the memorial at Sărmășu as modest and unobtrusive highlights its insufficiency to communicate historical reality to contemporary subjects. The narrator's bafflement at encountering such an innocuous reminder of such a terrible event mirrors descriptions of cemeteries and monuments in the work of other authors. In her 1986 travel piece 'Überall, wo man den Tod gesehen hat: Eine Sommerreise in Maramuresch' (Anywhere, where one has seen death: A Summer Journey in Maramureș'), Herta Müller's narrator responds with frustration to the sterile and empty sites of remembrance she visits in Northern Transylvania:

Denkmäler, Friedhöfe, Kirchen. Zweimal war Himmler persönlich in Oberwischau, hat das Judenghetto besucht und die Todeslisten überprüft. Unfälle, Krankheiten. Die Wiesen wiegen sich. "Der heitere Friedhof" in Săpînța ist ein zynischer Friedhof. Ich spür die Zeit. Sie ist kein Jahr. Ist Holz, und Wiese, und Schacht.<sup>53</sup>

The contrast she sets up between the pastoral scenes she describes in towns such as Sighet, Vișeu de Sus and Câmpulung la Tisa and her pre-existing knowledge of the Holocaust draws on the image of Maramureș County as a destination for heritage tourism in the contemporary era. Most strikingly, she creates a triangular comparative relationship between the peacefulness of Jewish cemeteries that predate the Second World War, the famous tourist attraction of the painted cemetery in Săpînța and the lack of known resting places for many Jews killed during the Holocaust in Northern Romania. The reassuring continuity found in the former sites, with their generations of people who died of natural causes and were buried with their relatives and neighbours, is irreconcilable with the history of which Müller has gone in search. The disturbing image of the restless meadow landscape, with the connotation of 'wiegen' (sway or rock) with 'Wiege' (cradle), hint at what that landscape and the pastoral nostalgia surrounding it might conceal.

Christian Maurer, writing in the 1970s-80s, produced a travelogue of Vojvodina in the Serbian Banat – a site of widespread ethnic cleansing and mass murder of partisans during the Second World War – under the title 'Fünf Entwürfe zu unmöglichen Denkmälern', which reflects upon this history (Maurer, 1980, 25-26). Vojvodina is a particularly evocative region to focus on in the context of German-speaking Romania because of the widespread recruitment of Swabians into the Prinz Eugen Division of the Waffen-SS, which was involved in violence anti-partisan warfare and ethnic cleansing in the Balkans.<sup>54</sup> Maurer's work also reflects the tendency among authors of the 1970s to bring their landscape-focused memory writing to bear on East and West German locations, which are often framed as the source of National Socialism.<sup>55</sup> He develops the theme of haunted landscape and monuments in travelogues from Berlin and Dresden, which focus on the submerged history of fascism:

unter den linden die wurzeln  
reichen tief  
in dürrtiges erd-  
reich hinunter, stoßen auf  
längst erstickte luft-  
schutz keller, ausgebrannte  
munitionslager, verrottete  
massen gräber, stahl-  
helme,  
koppeln (Maurer, 1978a, 5)

In this poem the uncanny awareness of Germany's past colours its perception in the present, with the natural world (plants, soil, processes of decay) providing the link between the two. In his poetry collection *Rostregen* (1986) Richard Wagner similarly uses the environment of the city to reflect on the presence of the past and the obscuring of historical reality. In a series of untitled poems that make up the section 'Der Ort des Baumes' he develops the image of a tree as a symbol of repression. At the beginning of the cycle, the enervating silence of the contemporary environment is captured in images of stasis and the covering of earth with concrete: 'Die Bewegungslosigkeit der Pflastersteine / unter dem Asphalt / Das Schweigen der Kanaldecke / Die Stille der Bäume am Straßenrand'. The narrating voice concludes 'Das Schweigen über den Steinen ist größer / als das Schweigen unter den Steinen.'<sup>56</sup> As he develops the theme, the trees move from their marginal position to centre stage and represent a disruptive force linking the past below the surface to the present above and in an

untitled poem about the abnegation of responsibility to the victims of Nazi crimes, the tree blossoms:

Die Nacht ist weiß  
Kriegsverbrecher werden von  
Verteidigungsministerium empfangen.  
Auschwitz ist ein Gedenktag.  
Der Baum blüht.  
Wascht euch doch mal die Hände  
in *rein jüdischer Seife*.  
Ihr Seifenminister,  
ihr Staatsgebilde, ihr Seifopern  
Gebt Ruhe,  
schweigt.  
Sie haben den Priester erschlagen.  
Der Baum blüht.<sup>57</sup>

Wagner's juxtaposition of the unresolved image of the tree with the bestial excesses of National Socialism, encapsulated in the image of human soap, and the failure of commemoration ('Auschwitz ist [nur] ein Gedenktag') links this criticism of memory culture and institutional hypocrisy to the materiality of genocide. War criminals walk in the halls of power, human remains are brought crashing into the everyday environment and the natural world reacts to human violence: the tree blossoms as a signal of what goes unheeded. As in Hodjak's and Müller's texts, Wagner uses familiar ideas about the Holocaust drawn from historical accounts of the concentration camp system as a prompt for reflecting on how we might access the history that is neglected, unspoken and repressed.

## Contaminated Landscapes and Embodied Memory

The pieces above are suggestive of a search for authentic traces of history and the necessary rejection of sanitised or straightforward remembrance. Although some of them refer to city landscapes, it is in interactions with the natural world that these more authentic traces tend to be found, in momentary sense impressions and details of the natural world that provide a connection to the historical Other and the history of the Holocaust as a local event. The focus on suburban and rural landscapes in the work of ethnic German writers from Romania is of particular interest when it comes to their engagement with less widely remembered historical events such as pogroms and mass shootings, and with the imbrication of *völkisch* ideals of space in the National Socialist project. At the most superficial level, texts often contain efforts to retrace the topography of past events, such as in Horst Fassel's stream of consciousness tour of Iași or in Müller's exploration of Vișeu de Sus: 'Which of the streets of this town was once the Judengasse. And later the ghetto' but elsewhere the engagement with landscape becomes more complex.<sup>58</sup> Mapping received information about the locality and images taken from the cultural memory of the Holocaust onto present-day relationships between the body and space becomes an important method for interrogating memory.

In an earlier poem that responds to events around Sărmășu and Sărmășel Mare – where the same Hungarian forces murdered 39 ethnic Romanians – Hodjak strongly evokes the sensory experiences of his narrator in the space of the massacre:

sărmășel cluj  
  
vor dieser seltnen erde unverhofft ergriffen  
von all dem unbegreiflichen: dunkel  
weht es uns an

aus diesem ringsum friedlichen gras  
auf diesem abgelegenen hügel  
unter diesem freien himmel (der  
allerdings nicht immer frei gewesen)

nichts wiegt plötzlich schwerer  
als die erde  
die uns an den schuhen klebt  
vierzig dorfbewohner einfach  
lebend darin eingescharrt<sup>59</sup>

The continuity between past and present represented in the rural landscape, open sky and topography of the hill provide literal common ground with the villagers whose history the narrator is trying to uncover, while attention paid to tactile details such as the wind and the cloying mud throw the reader back on their personal sense memories, opening up a conduit for engaging with the experience of those who previously moved through the space.

Helpful here is Alison Landsberg's concept of prosthetic memory, which describes the coming together of cultural memory and sensory perception as a means of accessing the experience of the historical Other. Applying this framework to the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C., Landsberg gives the example of the piles of shoes which make up one section of the exhibition as objects that enable the creation of 'prosthetic' memories in those confronted with them through physical, bodily experience.<sup>60</sup> The shoes are authentic, individualised markers of absent people but also relatable and mundane; the visitors to the museum are wearing shoes themselves and are confronted with the sensual details – cracked leather, signs of wear, and smell – of others' shoes. Their own bodily memories of shoe-wearing, present awareness of the physicality of their own and the unknown victims' shoes and imaginative ability to reconstruct the context and sensation of those shoes' removal combine to root this alien experience – the final removal of shoes ahead of being killed – into their own bodily memory.<sup>61</sup> The potential of such acts of prosthetic remembering to imaginatively recall the final moments of other human beings is powerful because it promotes empathetic engagement with historical others as individuals and signals – whilst not presuming to know – the internal lives of those who history remembers mostly in numbers alone.

Hodjak's poem focuses not on the familiar 'iconography' of the Holocaust but on a type of history which images of barbed wire, search lights and piled belongings do little to uncover. Yet Landsberg's explanation of the role of the sensory in uncovering a physical avenue for empathetic engagement remains relevant here. Where for her museum visitors it is cultural memory and historical knowledge (including from the exhibition itself) that provide the basis for imbuing the shoes and their physicality with significance, Hodjak's narrator reacts to his new historical awareness, ostensibly gained from his conversation with the old man, and his encounter with the space of the massacre. The sensory continuity the landscape represents – the elements, the earth, the sky – function in a similar way to the common bodily experience of wearing shoes, an unremarkable experience rendered powerful and meaningful through an imaginative engagement with that of the historical Other. This kind of prosthetic remembering abides with the physicality of human experience, relying on personal bodily memory to aid an empathetic investment in those who perished as human beings possessed of the same senses and capacity for internal life as the person now remembering them.

This kind of effort at memory is celebrated by Landsberg as a potential means to overcome the loss of memory brought about by generational change and a way in which the familiar symbols of the Holocaust, often argued to be emptied out by overuse and decontextualisation, can yield true ethical engagement. But embodied memory also arises as a response to the difficulty of accessing the 'unknown desert' of Nazi atrocities so frequently absent from cultural memory. In the works of the authors discussed in this paper – as well as other writers, artists and filmmakers from East

Central and Eastern Europe – interactions with landscape, and especially with the soil itself, recur and serve a double function: as a space of physical experience potentially shared with people of which there is now no visible trace and as the means by which those traces have been obscured. This duality is encapsulated in Hodjak's image of the mud that clings to his narrator's shoes, which, aside from activating prosthetic memories of the final moments of the people who were killed on the hill (by evoking the common bodily experience of struggling through the mud) also serves as a reminder of the continued presence of their bodies in the soil, rendering the history of the space jarringly concrete.

This turn to physical experience as a conduit of memory is also relevant to efforts to uncover collective guilt and the realities of perpetrating such crimes. Werner Söllner and Herta Müller in particular have opted to focus on this type of embodied memory, tying the history of genocide to the traditions of rural life and labour. In his poem 'Verkehrte Zeit' ('Time in Reverse', 1980), Söllner explores historical guilt through imagery related to agriculture and the conceit of time switching into reverse:

Unsre Bekannten

erbleichen, in vager Befürchtung: Niemanden mehr haben unsre Väter  
erschossen [...]

Unsren im Land verbliebenen Vätern bleibt noch  
ein Bißchen Zeit. Aus dem Boden fährt ihnen Blut  
in die Adern und Schweiß in die Poren, ihre übrigen  
Griffe verschwimmen im Dunkel geschichtlicher  
Wahrheit.

In der spiegelnden Luft liegt ein verkehrter  
Geruch von Aufbruch. Jeder sucht seine Spur  
im Staub. Wer ein Gewissen besitzt, erinnert sich dunkel  
an später.<sup>62</sup>

The image of blood returning from the ground and re-entering the veins of its owner reflects the old expression 'blood, sweat and tears' ('Blut, Schweiß, Tränen') used to describe hard work and echoes ideas about the proud farming heritage of the Banat Swabians yet the combination of blood and soil also evokes the history of the National Socialism and the Holocaust in several ways. In addition to the obvious allusion to the Nazi slogan 'Blut und Boden', the abstraction which sets in at the end of that stanza allows an associative link between the familiar agriculture labour of the post-war and the practicalities of mass killing during the men's service as soldiers to arise. The 'Aufbruch' of the present-day Banat Swabians, who are emigrating to the West, is linked directly to the cataclysm of the Second World War. The ambivalence of the imagery surrounding the soil and the juxtaposition of the 'trails' the men follow with their guilty memories signal an understanding of German crimes which is linked to the space of Eastern Europe and the same soil and dust the men have worked for generations. The physical gestures associated with their labour are forever tainted by the potential actions of their bodies in other times and places and function as an iteration of past violence, allowing the reader to imaginatively reconstruct the actions of the perpetrator in concealing bodies. The actions of digging, planting and burying that make up the 'übrige Griffe' (usual manoeuvres with tools) of the Germans' agricultural milieu become a conduit of embodied memory linking back to the actions of those involved in the crimes of fascism.

A similar defamiliarization of daily agricultural labour in response to cultural memories of the Holocaust can be read in Herta Müller's fiction, as well as her autobiographical writing on her father, who served in the Waffen-SS. She often discusses her father as having 'made graveyards' and uses this imagery in texts such as *Herztier* (1994), where the narrator's father obsession with

eradicating weeds in his cottage garden becomes symbolic of his previous crimes.<sup>63</sup> However, Müller goes a step further than Hodjak or Söllner, by extending the uncanny depiction of the Romanian landscape into the natural world and the life-cycle of plants and cattle. The day-to-day slaughter of animals as part of farming becomes an indicator of the crimes committed against human beings during the Second World War and plants themselves function variously as victims of violence and as co-conspirators in the concealment of human bodies.<sup>64</sup> Across her oeuvre Müller displays a preoccupation with the rural environment as a space of death and memory and in 'Sommerreise in Maramuresch' it is nature – plants and animals – rather than gravestones and sites of remembrance through which her narrator relates the space of Northern Romania to her existing knowledge of the Holocaust:

Und unterm Himmel, eingeschlossen in hohe, gemauerte Zäune seh ich die jüdischen Friedhöfe. Graue Steine im Wiesengras am Straßenrand. Zwei Männer mähen die rotbraunen Rispen wie Haar. Menschen wie Gras. Wilde Margareten mit weißen Zähnen, blaue Glocken und Blätter wie Pfeile. Wie ist dieser Kreislauf der kleinen, dunkelroten Kirschen in den Friedhofsbäumen. Große Krähen sitzen auf den Ästen und spucken blutige Kerne aus.<sup>65</sup>

The cemetery that the narrator visits is innocuous but her perception of the hidden history of the space renders its tranquillity and the abundance of plant life encroaching upon it ominous and significant. The conflation of grass and human hair is particularly disturbing, evoking both the obvious historical connotation of hair collected from victims of Nazi mass murder and the blending of human and non-human into the landscape. Once again here the actions of men in maintaining the land are rendered uncanny, with the sentence 'Menschen wie Gras', which stands in isolation in the passage, suggesting the interchangeability of humans and non-humans as the object of those actions and the numerous people who were metaphorically 'mown down' by the National Socialists. Flowers take on the predatory attributes that suggest their complicity in violence and recall the use by the Nazis of fast-growing flowers such as lupins to conceal burial sites, while the evocation of the circulatory system suggests a symbiotic relationship that aligns the plants and the murderers who supply them with sustenance.<sup>66</sup> The Jewish cemetery is not the space of exception in which the violence of the Holocaust is recorded or a space that allows the questing narrator to uncover the history she is searching for, rather it is the rest of the rural landscape that contains the truth of the horror and violence to which it bore witness.

Müller's strategies for reading history in the landscape and agriculture inform the full breadth of the oeuvre but are particularly visible in novels such as *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger* (1992). As I have argued elsewhere in the case of *Herztier* (1994), Müller uses the iconography of the Holocaust and close attention to rural space to evoke hidden violence in the past and present, drawing the Nazi past and the violence of the Ceaușescu into multidirectional relation:

Liviu ist Pauls Schulfreund, er ist seit zwei Jahren Lehrer in einem kleinen Dorf im Süden, wo die Donau das Land abschneidet, wo die Felder in den Himmel stoßen und die verblühten Disteln weiße Kissen in die Donau werfen. Im Dorf trinken die Bauern vor dem Frühstück Schnaps und gehen aufs Feld, hat Liviu gesagt. Und die Frauen stopfen Gänse mit eingefettetem Mais. Und der Polizist, der Pfarrer, der Bürgermeister und die Lehrer tragen Goldzähne im Mund.

Die rumänische Bauern essen und trinken zu viel, weil sie zuwenig haben, hat Liviu gesagt, und sie reden zu wenig, weil sie zuviel wissen. Und den Fremden trauen sie nicht, auch wenn sie dasselbe essen und trinken, weil Fremde keinen Goldzahn haben.<sup>67</sup>

In this scene, the narrator describes a village community implicated in the crimes of the regime by its proximity to the Danube border. The sense of compression and restriction communicated in the

cutting off of land with water and the proximity of earth and sky is at odds with the easy rhythm of rural life, of everyday household activities and clear societal roles. The people who operate in this environment are contaminated by it because they are initiated into the secret kept by the regime and know about the reality of suffering and death that exists beneath the veneer of rural idyll. They are compelled to drink and eat, consuming the products of the landscape of death as a trade-off for their silence. Elsewhere in the text, fields of cereal are revealed to be de facto graveyards for those who seek to escape the regime, with farmers and farm workers forced into complicity as they plough the bones of those shot into the earth.<sup>68</sup> The choice of the gold tooth as a symbol of membership in this conspiracy reveals the significance of the Holocaust in Müller's depiction of the compromised rural community and the passage contains several images that she later elaborates on in *Herztier*, each referring to the Nazi past. The thistle down, which functions in this novel as a symbol of anonymous death and the shared awareness of failed escape attempts of so-called 'border jumpers', is tied through the character of Herr Feyerabend in *Herztier* to the experience of Jewish citizens of Romania during the war as he recalls eating thistles to survive.<sup>69</sup> The drinking of schnaps and the image of the stuffed geese is redolent of descriptions of the father in *Herztier*, whose liver, cirrhotic due to his alcoholism, is represented as a stuffed goose, containing the memories he wishes to forget.<sup>70</sup> Müller's fixation on gold teeth as a symbol of National Socialist crimes is evident in her critique of German language in the essay collection 'In der Falle', in which she identifies the saying 'Morgenstund hat Gold im Mund' as evidence of a failure to come to terms with the past and latent fascist tendencies in German culture.

The image of the earth and the life that springs from it as a circulatory system that appears in Müller's Maramureş travelogue is also repeated in *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger*, in the image of a red kite that lands on the freshly harvested field: 'Der rote Milan sitzt auf dem Feld, als wäre sein Bauch von den Stoppeln angebohrt, er bewegt sich nicht. Weil das Stoppelfeld hart und leer ist, weil der Bauch des Bogels weich ist, dreht der Himmel, während die Stoppeln den Vogel aussaugen, zwei weiße Wolken.'<sup>71</sup> Plant life is once again depicted as predatory, changed in its nature by the presence of dead bodies in the soil so that it hungers for the blood of ambulatory beings. The clouds that are the product of the corn stubble's sucking dry of the kite mirror the white thistle down that are all that remain of the Ceauşescu regime's, pillows for the dead.<sup>72</sup> Although focusing on the dead of the 1980s, Müller's work is indebted to her early engagement with the Holocaust in Romania and the presence of the past in the everyday environment of Romania's borderlands. Her displacement of historical knowledge onto the plant life, soil and sky of rural spaces centre marginal experiences of political oppression and reinstate violence and suffering in the fetishised pastoral environment.

## Conclusion

In their engagement with space and with local incidences of mass killing on the periphery of what is usually thought of as the Holocaust, authors such as Hodjak and Müller anticipate more recent work done to challenge the nature of Western remembrance. Searching for traces of the history they have read about in German and Austrian texts and finding it lacking – there were no gas chambers in Romania, the streets of Vişeu de Sus give no indication that Himmler ever walked them – they turn to local stories, prosthetic memory and scrutiny of the rural environment to uncover the submerged history of violence in northern Romania. By connecting isolated incidents of violence to established cultural memories of the Holocaust, the authors are able to establish a productive tension. The experiences recorded in survivor testimony and the historiography of the concentration camp do not marry easily with local events and traces but that knowledge is used to reveal the magnitude of individual acts of killing and provides the basis for a reinterpretation of the rural landscape as a space concealing untold stories and lost lives. This focus on landscape and the presence of human remains in the soil is a central concern of the current 'forensic turn' observable in both cultural products and historiography, and in efforts to complicate the image of the Holocaust as an event

that took place out of sight and mind, in places of exception.<sup>73</sup> Informed by Western literature and historiography and responding to Eastern sites of memory, these Romanian-German authors of the 1970s and 1980s were ahead of their time in putting forward a complex, transnational memory of the Holocaust defined by tensions between the local and the international, the represented and the forgotten.

During the 1970s and 1980s a small number of German-speaking writers in Romania embarked upon personal crusades best understood as a kind of memory activism. They sought to uncover the history of racist mass murder during the fascist era – through interviews, research trips, investigations of local areas and by collecting international literature and historiography – and to bring the knowledge they gained to a wider audience. Responding to the greater recognition of Jewish suffering internationally and to West German and Austrian writing on collective guilt, a range of authors, and in particular Claus Stephani, Franz Hodjak and Herta Müller, began to look for traces of Jewish history and of the Holocaust in Romania, calling into question the received understandings of the Nazi era with which they had been raised and breaking down the comfortable distance communist discourse had allowed ethnic Germans to maintain from the crimes committed in their name. However, despite the obvious significance of this writing as part of a contemporary, international dialogue on the fascist past, it also contains local specificities which contribute to the understanding of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe even today. They are exceptional in Romania, where the remembrance of the Holocaust has been delayed and limited,<sup>74</sup> and they are exceptional in the history of German-language writing for their approach to that topic and their anticipation of the writing of the ‘Eastern Turn’ and the ‘forensic turn’ since the 1990s.<sup>75</sup> Perhaps most significantly, the focus on space and encounters with landscape within the works discussed below promotes an alternative view of the Holocaust to the Auschwitz-centric model current in the West and internationally since the 1960s.<sup>76</sup> For these authors – some of whom explicitly respond to the dissonances in Holocaust memory they perceive – it is the everyday environment, rather than spaces of exception such as the camps, which are the primary site of mass killing and of remembrance. Although spurred to action by international debates and West German and Austrian writing, these authors brought a fresh perspective to the transnational processing of the fascist past which can supplement both Eastern and Western discourses.

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<sup>1</sup> F. Hodjak, "Reiseintermezzo", *Neue Literatur* 28, 6(1977): 26-27. All translations my own.

<sup>2</sup> S. Lehnstaedt, *Der Kern des Holocaust: Belzec, Sobibór, Treblinka und die Aktion Reinhardt* (Munich, C.H. Beck, 2017), 8-9. T. D. Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 382.

<sup>3</sup> T. D. Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (London: Vintage, 2011), 384

<sup>4</sup> P. Desbois, *The Holocaust by Bullets: A Priest's Journey to Uncover the Truth Behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews* (New York: Palgrave, 2011); *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht*, ed. U. Jureit, C. Bittenberg et al, (Hamburg: Hamburg Edition, 2002)

<sup>5</sup> A. Landsberg, "America, the Holocaust, and the Mass Culture of Memory: Towards a Radical Politics of Empathy," *New German Critique* 71(1997): 71.

<sup>6</sup> P. Pawlikowski 2013, written by Paweł Pawlikowski and Rebecca Lenkiewicz, *Ida* concerns the collaboration of ethnic Poles in the murder of Polish Jews. Alexievich's collections of testimonies from women in the Red Army (*войны не женское лицо* [War Does Not Have a Woman's Face] - Minsk: Mastatskaya literatura, 1985) and children who survived and witnessed Nazi ethnic cleansing policies in Belarus and Ukraine (*Последние свидетели: сто не детских колыбельных* [A Hundred Unchildlike Lullabies] - Moscow: Molodaya Gvardiya, 1985) have reached new audiences and wider acclaim since her award of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2015.

<sup>7</sup> T. D. Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 382.

<sup>8</sup> P. Milata, *Zwischen Hitler, Stalin und Antonescu: Rumäniendeutsche in der Waffen-SS*, 2nd revised ed. (Cologne: Böhlau, 1999), 309. M. Hausleitner, "Romania in the Second World War. Revisionist out of Necessity," in *Territorial Revisionism and the Allies of Germany in the Second World War*, ed. M. Cattaruzza, S. Dryhoff and D. Langewiesche, 173-192 (London: Berghahn, 2012), 186; R. Ioanid, "The Holocaust in Romania: The Iasi Pogrom of June 1941," *Contemporary European History* 2, 2(1993): 130. K. Hitchins, *Romania 1866-1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 502-03; M. Kelso and D. L. Eglitis, "Holocaust commemoration in Romania: Roma and the contested politics of memory and memorialization," *Journal of Genocide Research* 16,



4(2014): 492-3. C. Petrescu, "When Dictatorships Fail to Deprive of Dignity: Herta Müller's 'Romanian Period'," in *Herta Müller: Aesthetics and Politics*, ed. B. Brandt and V. Glajar, 57-86 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 64.

<sup>9</sup> M. Hausleitner, 'Die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Holocaust in Rumänien', in *Umdeuten, verschweigen, erinnern. Die späte Aufarbeitung des Holocausts in Osteuropa*, ed. M. Brumlik and K. Sauerland, 71-89 (Frankfurt: Campus, 2010) 79, 84.

<sup>10</sup> P. Milata, *Zwischen Hitler, Stalin und Antonescu*, 217, 263. W. Totok, *Die Zwänge der Erinnerung: Aufzeichnungen aus Rumänien* (Hamburg: Junius, 1988), 34.

<sup>11</sup> P. Milata, *Zwischen Hitler, Stalin und Antonescu*, 296.

<sup>12</sup> R. Rădalescu, "Einige Anmerkungen zur Interkulturalität in deutschsprachigen Erzählungen aus Rumänien," in *Minderheitenliteraturen – Grenzerfahrung und Reterritorialisierung. Festschrift für Stefan Sienerth* [GGR-Beiträge zur Germanistik, 19] ed. G. Guțu, I. Crăciun and I. Patrut, 177-92 (Bucharest: Paideia, 2008), 188.

<sup>13</sup> L. Bilsky et al, "The Eichmann Trial Fifty Years On," *German History* 29, 2(2011): 265–282. R. Wolf, "'Mass Deception without Deceivers'? The Holocaust on East and West German Radio in the 1960s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 41, 4(2006): 741. D. Pendas in L. Bilsky et al, "The Eichmann Trial Fifty Years On," 271-72.

<sup>14</sup> Some of those who faced trial during the 1960s were Romanian Germans. The most notorious case was that of Victor Capesius (b. Miercurea Sibiului, 1907) the former pharmacist of Dachau and Auschwitz, who worked closely with Joseph Mengele during the period 1944-45. Dieter Schlesak's novel *Capesius, der Auschwitzapotheker* (Bonn: Dietz, 2006) gives a fictionalised account of his involvement in selections and mistreatment of prisoners in Auschwitz. Capesius was imprisoned following the first Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial but released in 1968. A. Weber, *Rumäniendeutsche?: Diskurse zur Gruppenidentität einer Minderheit (1944-1971)* (Köln: Böhlau, 2010), 165; W. Marin, "Mördern auf der Spur. Simon Wiesenthal gibt zu Protokoll," *Neue Banater Zeitung*, 14 March, 1970, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Kramer and Miller are mentioned in the section 'Kulturspiegel' in *Neue Literatur* 7-8 (1967): 157; Steiner in *Neue Literatur* 5-6 (1966): 158.

<sup>16</sup> *Neue Literatur* 1-2 (1967): 108-09; 111.

<sup>17</sup> An article from 8 March 1972 names Jews as targets of the Nazis for the first time since January 1965 (the beginning of my sample) – articles prior to 1970 refer exclusively to socialist freedom fighters as targets of persecution under fascism but further research is needed to establish whether this was also the case in previous decades.

<sup>18</sup> W. Totok, *Die Zwänge der Erinnerung*, 29-31.

<sup>19</sup> A. Weber, *Rumäniendeutsche?: Diskurse zur Gruppenidentität einer Minderheit (1944-1971)*, 279, O. Spiridon, "Herta Müllers frühe Erzählungen: Kontexte, literarisches Umfeld und formende Impulse," in *Kann Literatur Zeuge sein? Poetologische und politische Aspekte in Herta Müllers Werk* [Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik Reihe A, Band 112], ed. D. Merchiers, J. Lajarrige and S. Höhne, Steffen, 61-79 (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014), 63-64.

<sup>20</sup> H. Kehr (S. Heinz), "Heidestadt 1944," *Neue Literatur* 25, 7(1974): 7-27.

<sup>21</sup> F. Keller, "Durst," *Neue Literatur* 6 (1965): 37-47.

<sup>22</sup> F. Keller, "Durst," 46.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> H. Anger, 'Zwischen Grenzsituation und Plauderton. Zu dem Kurzprosaaband *Man bringt nicht viel aus Cherbourg*', in *Reflexe: Kritische Beiträge zur rumäniendeutschen Gegenwartsliteratur*, Hrsg. Emmerich Reichrath, Bukarest, Kriterion, 1977, pp. 217-220, p.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Wagner (b. Lovrin, 1952), Johan Lippet (b. Wels, 1951), Albert Bohn (b. Arad, 1955), Werner Krem (b. Sânnicolau Mare, 1951), Gerhard Ortinau (b. Borcea, 1953), Anton Sterbling (b. Sânnicolau Mare, 1953), William Totok (b. Comloșu Mare, 1951), Rolf Bossert (b. Reșița, 1952), Ernest Wichner (b. Zăbrani, 1952)

<sup>26</sup> B. Mabee, "'I wash tears and sweat out of old moss': Remembrance of the Holocaust in the Poetry of Sarah Kirsch" (1993) In: Martin, Elaine. ed. *Gender Patriarchy and Fascism in the Third Reich: The Response of Women Writers*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 201-43, 223; E. Reichrath, 'Vorwort' *Reflexe: Kritische Beiträge zur rumäniendeutschen Gegenwartsliteratur*, Hrsg. Emmerich Reichrath, Bukarest, Kriterion, 1977, 9-17, 10; Bernd Kolf "'mit der wahrheit mit der verstoßenen'" (Zu dem Band "Spielräume, Gedichte und Einfälle") *Reflexe: Kritische Beiträge zur rumäniendeutschen Gegenwartsliteratur*, pp. 141-143, 142.

<sup>27</sup> Attacked for being stooges

<sup>28</sup> H. Müller, *Immer derselbe Schnee und immer derselbe Onkel* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2011), 78.

<sup>29</sup> W. Totok, *Die Zwänge der Erinnerung*, 78.

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<sup>30</sup> Neue Subjektivität

<sup>31</sup> R. Wagner, "Laudatio auf Herta Müller," reported *Neue Banater Zeitung*, 7 June, 1981.

<sup>32</sup> J. Lippert, "biographie. ein muster," *Neue Literatur* 29, 8(1978): 11-16, B. Waitz, „'schneewittchen in deinem schwaben-dörfchen," *Neue Literatur* 25, 4(1980): 16-17, W. Ehrmann, "Krista," *Neue Literatur* 31, 4(1980): 19-20.

<sup>33</sup> H. Müller: „Und ist der Ort, wo wir leben“. Schreiben aus Unzufriedenheit. Gespräch mit der Schriftstellerin Herta Müller. *Die Woche*, Sibiu, Nr. 747 vom 9. April 1982

<sup>34</sup> K. Konjetsky, "Vision 1," *Neue Literatur* 31, 4(1980): 41.

<sup>35</sup> R. Düsterberg, 'Masse und Elite. Krieg, Wehrmacht und Nationalsozialismus in Curt Hohoff: *Woina – Woina* (1951)' in *Von Böll bis Buchheim: Deutsche Kriegsprosa nach 1945*, (1997), ed. Hans Wagener, *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik* Band 42, Amsterdam: Rodopi, pp. 155-81, 167. E. Bahr, 'Defensive Kompensation. Peter Bamm: *Die unsichtbare Flagge* (1952) und Heinz G. Konsalik: *Der Arzt von Stalingrad* (1956)', in *Von Böll bis Buchheim: Deutsche Kriegsprosa nach 1945*, (1997), ed. Hans Wagener, *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik* Band 42, Amsterdam: Rodopi, pp. 199-211, 207.

<sup>36</sup> D. C. G. Lorenz, 'Social Darwinism in Edgar Hilsenrath's Ghetto Novel *Nacht*' in *Insiders and Outsiders: Jewish and Gentile Culture in Germany and Austria*, edited by Dagmar C. G. Lorenz, Gabriele Weinberger 214-223, 214

<sup>37</sup> Adler

<sup>38</sup> B. Ohm Autorenblog. <http://berndohm.de/die-shoah-in-der-ukraine/>; K. Theweleit, 'On the German Reaction to Jonathan Littell's *Les bienveillantes*' *New German Critique*, 36, 1 (2009), pp. 21-34; in the first twenty days of its existence, the FAZ online Reading Room for *The Kindly Ones* had been accessed over 850,000 times: 'FAZ Reading Room wird ausgebaut', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 22 February 2008. Available online: <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/buecher/f-a-z-reading-room-wird-ausgebaut-1514930.html> (last accessed: 14 November 2019).

<sup>39</sup> W. Bredel, 'Das schweigende Dorf', in *Das schweigende Dorf und andere Erzählungen*, 1949.

<sup>40</sup> C. Stephani, "Schmerz bis in den Tod," *Neue Literatur* 35, 7(1984): 44.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> A. Corbea-Hoisie, "'Wie die Juden Gewalt schreien': Aurel Onciul und die antisemitische Wende in der Bukowiner Öffentlichkeit nach 1907', *East Central Europe* 39 (2012) 13–60

<sup>44</sup> O. Spiridon, *Untersuchungen zur rumäniendeutschen Erzählliteratur der Nachkriegszeit* (2002). Oldenburg: Igel. p.65.

<sup>45</sup> H. Fassel, "jassy – der vorstoss der rückschau," *Neue Literatur* 28, 1(1977): 80.

<sup>46</sup> R. Ioanid, 'The Holocaust in Romania: The Iasi Pogrom of June 1941', 143. Estimates vary between 4,000 and 13,000 but Ioanid favours a figure of 8,000, based on findings in the archives of the Romanian Ministry of the Interior by Gheorghe Zaharia. G. Zaharia, *Pages de la resistance antifasciste en Roumanie* (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1974), 45.

<sup>47</sup> M. Hausleitner, "Die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Holocaust in Rumänien," 73.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, 77.

<sup>49</sup> I.C. Butnaru, *The Silent Holocaust: Romania and Its Jews*, Contributions to the Study of World History 31, (New York: Greenwood, 1991), Y. Govrin, *Israeli-Romanian Relations at the End of the Ceausescu Era* (London: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>50</sup> F. Hodjak, "Reiseintermezzo," *Neue Literatur* 28, 6(1977): 26.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, 27, I.C. Butnaru, *The Silent Holocaust: Romania and Its Jews*, 159-160. N. M. Nagy-Tavara, "The Anatomy of a Massacre: Sarmas 1944," *The Simon Wiesenthal Centre Annual* 7(1990): 40-62.

<sup>52</sup> F. Hodjak, "Reiseintermezzo," 26.

<sup>53</sup> H. Müller, "Überall, wo man den Tod gesehen hat: Eine Sommerreise in Maramuresch," in *Barfüßiger Februar*, 101-21 (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1990), 115.

<sup>54</sup> T. Goldsworthy, *Valhalla's Warriors: A History of the Waffen-SS on the Eastern Front 1941-1945*. (2007) Indianapolis: Dog Ear Press, p.95; T. Casagrande, *Die volksdeutsche SS-Division 'Prinz Eugen': die Banater Schwaben und die nationalsozialistischen Kriegsverbrechen* (2003). Frankfurt: Campus.

<sup>55</sup> T. Krause, "Die Fremde rast durchs Gehirn, das Nichts..." *Deutschlandbilder in den Texten der Banater Autorengruppe (1969-1991)*, Studien zur Reiseliteratur und Imagologieforschung Band 3 (Hrsg) Elke Mehnert/ Uwe Hentschel, Frankfurt, Peter Land, 1998, 169.

<sup>56</sup> R. Wagner, 'Der Ort des Baumes', *Rostregen. Gedichte*, Darmstadt, Luchterhand, 1986. p. 117.

<sup>57</sup> R. Wagner, 'Der Ort des Baumes', *Rostregen. Gedichte*, p. 127.

<sup>58</sup> 'Welche der Straßen dieser Stadt war mal die Judengasse. Und später das Judenghetto' *ibid.*, 105.

<sup>59</sup> F. Hodjak, "Sărmășel. Cluj," *Neue Literatur* 24, 8(1973): 5.

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- <sup>60</sup> A. Landsberg, "America, the Holocaust, and the Mass Culture of Memory," 79-80.
- <sup>61</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>62</sup> W. Söllner, "Verkehrte Zeit," in *Eine Entwohnung*, 6-7 (Bucharest: Kriterion, 1980).
- <sup>63</sup> H. Müller, *Herztier* (1994) (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2010), 21.
- <sup>64</sup> See for example *Herztier*, in which the plants that 'flee' the father's hoe (the white seed cases of milk thistles) are associated with the narrator's Jewish neighbour Herr Feyerabend, who ate the same plants in order to survive during the war. H. Müller, *Herztier*, 143.
- <sup>65</sup> H. Müller, "Überall, wo man den Tod gesehen hat", 104-05
- <sup>66</sup> Vasily Grossman was the first to describe the use of lupins to cover up evidence of extermination camps in his 1944 article "The Hell of Treblinka". V. Grossman, "The Hell of Treblinka" (1944), V. Grossman, *The Road: Stories, Journalism, and Essays* (London: Libanus, 2011).
- <sup>67</sup> H. Müller, *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger* (2009), Frankfurt am Main, Fischer p. 54
- <sup>68</sup> H. Müller, *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger*, p. 71.
- <sup>69</sup> H. Müller, *Herztier* (2010), Frankfurt am Main: Fischer. P. 143-44.
- <sup>70</sup> *ibid* p.71.
- <sup>71</sup> H. Müller, *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger*, p. 71.
- <sup>72</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>73</sup> See for example E. Anstett and J Dreyfus, *Human Remains and Identification: Mass Violence, Genocide and the 'Forensic Turn'* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015). M. Pollack, *Kontaminierte Landschaften* (Vienna: Residenz, 2014).
- <sup>74</sup> M. Kelso and D. L. Eglitis, "Holocaust commemoration in Romania: Roma and the contested politics of memory and memorialization."
- <sup>75</sup> B. Haines, "The Eastern Turn in Contemporary German, Swiss and Austrian Literature," *Debatte: Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 16, 2(2008): 135-49.
- <sup>76</sup> R. van der Laarse, "Archaeology of memory. Europe's Holocaust dissonances in East and West," ed. D. Callebaut, J. Mařík and J. Maříková-Kubková, 121-130, *Heritage Reinvents Europe EAC Occasional Paper No. 7 Proceedings of the Internationale Conference* (Jambe: Europae Archaeologiae Consilium (EAC), Association Internationale sans But Lucratif (AISBL), 2013): 126.